



Session:	1/65
Date:	25 November 2015
No:	29

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS AND ORAL QUESTION PERIOD
(PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS)

FOR

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2015

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Premier and education responsibility

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier. When you announced your new direction for education you assumed direct responsibility for the state of the Island education. Do you accept that responsibility?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I accept responsibility to lead the government on education and other issues and I do it happily, and I'm glad to say the voters supported that.

We have a Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture who, as he has said before this House and when we unveiled the new plan, is directly responsible for the education file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Post-English school board plan

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: When you decided to axe the English school board the assumption was you and your government have a plan ready to implement. Will you openly share that plan with Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what we unveiled or what was unveiled in early November was a new approach with a number of important mechanisms in place, all centred on the successful outcomes for the learner.

One of those elements is a Learning Partners Advisory Council, which I co-chair along

with Dr. Bill Whelan who was formerly chair of the Educational Governance Commission and president of the Home and School Association. That is an indication of the talent that is committed to this.

Absolutely, this will be open and transparent and in fact, Islanders will be included in shaping the policy for education and that precisely is the function of the Learning Partners Advisory Council, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Excellence in education

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the education minister. At your new direction news conference you talked about excellence. How do you define excellence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are committed to doing everything that we possibly can collaboratively and in the engaging effort to focus on student achievement and on excellence in education, and this will come from the grassroots level right up to the education sector.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Question to the Premier: What specific steps has your government taken (Indistinct) at that news conference to achieve excellence in education?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I believe, Mr. Speaker, the question is what specific steps we've taken since the news conference.

The first step that we are taking is to bring together the groups who – or the people who will comprise the groups, the Principals'

Council, the District Advisory Councils, and the Learning Partnership Advisory Council. Further, at the news conference it was announced that Ricky Hood, who is the long-time teacher administrator and principal, will be the sole trustee overseeing the school board through a transitional period.

As I did when I mentioned Dr. Bill Whelan, it's an indication of our commitment and of precisely how we see these measures going forward that our deputy minister of education, Susan Willis, and Ricky Hood, who is the sole trustee, have between them 75 years of experience teaching and acting directly in education in this province and they have a great reputation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind the Premier that when Bill Whelan made recommendations before to the previous minister of education – not that one, that one – he ignored many of them and took steps that were directly against what he was advised. I guess that's when we get into what's going wrong with having advisory committees without teeth.

Notification of education system changes

We're going to talk a little bit more about the timeline here today. Question to the minister: When did you notify school principals about your planned changes to education?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The principals were notified through the teachers' federation the day that we made the announcement, November 4th.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The teachers' federation is a union and their job is to look out for the collective bargaining rights of teachers and by all accounts they do a great job of that. The principals work for the system and they work for you and they answer directly to you, as per your declaration the day that you talked about this new system.

Why did you not directly notify the principals about the changes to education?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're very proud to move forward with a new education delivery and system here on Prince Edward Island that's going to focus on our learner, and the principals have a very important role to play in that. There is a new council specifically for principals that they can use to either advocate for their schools or ask certain asks or provide input for policy decision.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can see that you're very proud, and I've heard this a number of times, and it sounds like you don't know a whole lot about the changes that are about to take place, certainly none of which you were able to verbalize to this House on several occasions when you've been given the opportunity, not the least of which is two full days of debate on the bill to change the school act, when you had somebody sitting beside you who had the majority of the answers and you still weren't able to tell us much of anything at all.

Question again to the minister: When did you first notify the parents about your changes to the education system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The great thing about this moving forward with the delivery of education and the development is that we are going to engage and to collaborate from grassroots right through to the educational sector, bringing everyone on board.

Parents now have an active voice and their voice will be heard. This is something that is very important to us moving forward and delivering and developing the education plan that we need for Prince Edward Island students to achieve in the world.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just for the House record, the question that I asked was: When did you first notify the parents about your planned changes? We talk about how we're going to collaborate and what a great idea it is to collaborate and I believe in collaboration when you do it, but this isn't collaboration when you tell them or don't tell them.

Question to the minister: How did you notify the parents about your changes? Did you send a letter home? Did you send an email? Did you post a video to Facebook?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The great thing about this is now parents have an opportunity to engage directly with the direction that education should take on Prince Edward Island, focusing on the learner, focusing on the student, and excellence in education.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like the parents have yet to be notified, so they're a very important part of this process as we move forward, as are the

principals, according to government, at least, who've yet to notify anyone.

Question to the minister: When did you notify the learners about your planned changes to the education system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The good thing about this new education system is that it will involve students, it will involve parents, the community, the frontlines, right across the Island. That's a collaborative effort and an engaging effort. This is what we want to do. We want to make sure that we hear the concerns that are out there and the input that they have to help direct us.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I went to the announcement the day that the Premier basically announced this on behalf of his minister. What I took from that day is that the learner was going to be the centre of the entire system, yet the learner has yet to be notified that in fact that's the case, that there's going to be any changes or how it will impact the learner. The learner that this government has notified the Island is going to be the most important part of the system. Also hasn't notified the principals, also hasn't notified the parents. This sounds a whole lot like how this government has operated the past eight years.

Education system and learner engagement

The learner is supposed to be the centre of this system. Question to the minister: How many learners did you engage prior to making this announcement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, moving forward – and that’s the direction that we’re going with education in a very collaborative and engaging effort which we will have input from students, which are our learners, from parents who have an invested interest in learners, and also from the frontline and anyone else in the education or community that has any kind of concern or can offer any kind of input to help our students achieve in the global world.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Education system collaboration

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of education: With whom did you collaborate with before you made your announcement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the opposition doesn’t get is that moving forward the plan is to collaborate and to engage so that everybody who has an interest in education is involved.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister: Can the minister provide a date to this House from which day forward collaboration will begin?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’ve announced in the House just last week that would be advisory councils will be meeting hopefully in January. The letters have gone out to the schools to ask for a selection of individuals to sit on those councils. We look forward to the

organization of those councils and to collaborate with them.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Two questions ago the minister basically said that we need to understand better that when going forward it was going to be collaborative.

Question to the minister: Can you confirm to this House that there was no collaboration with anybody prior to now?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was a great deal of collaboration prior to this announcement. We went back over reports that had went from one end of the Island to the other: the Education Governance Commission, the Task Force on Student Achievement. All those recommendations were used and recommendations that came from these commissions and reports that had great collaboration and collective information from all Islanders.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Minister’s faith in board and superintendent

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back in the spring of 2014 I had made note to the then-minister of education that I didn’t think the superintendent or the board were doing a great job, and his response to me was: Our board and our superintendent are doing an absolutely great job and I have full faith in them whether the hon. member across the floor has none or not.

Question to the minister of education: Do you believe that the previous minister should

have had any faith in the board or the superintendent seeing as you had none?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have great faith in the individuals that will come forward to help create and direct our education system on Prince Edward Island that will focus on student learning and will focus on excellence and education.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Public sharing of education plan

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a plan – or maybe there's not a plan – it can't be shared with the House because we assume there's no plan.

Question to the minister: Have you finalized a schedule that you'll go to public consultation and engagement and share this plan with Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The plan is to create these advisory councils that will put input back into the system. We will create that plan as we move forward to deliver the best possible education that we can for our learners here on Prince Edward Island in a very collaborative and engaging effort.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Public education plan schedule

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many of us over here and many in the public don't think that you have a plan and don't think that you even have a schedule.

Question to the minister: Have you even begun to develop a schedule yet?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As mentioned yesterday, the transition team is now in place. They've met. They are starting the work moving forward. Letters have been sent out to the schools asking for individuals to either be selected or put their name forward to some of these advisory councils.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Education transition team

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had the minister on the floor here yesterday debating his bill to change the *School Act* and he couldn't answer any questions about the transition team. Apparently there is one in place and they've already met.

Question to the minister: Who's on the transition team?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did answer that probably 20 out of the 20 times that they asked yesterday and I'll answer it again today.

On the transition team we have the deputy, of course, of Education, Early Learning and Culture. We have deputies from Workforce and Advanced Learning, also Family and Human Services, when needed, as we were looking at a more broad education delivery on the Island. There's also three from our department, there will be three from the school board on it, there will be HR people representing, and also legal.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

EELC minister and counterparts re: education

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We watched the other provinces in Atlantic Canada kind of go down this road, and we know Nova Scotia has had an extensive report that they're kind of going through now, and we know that Nova Scotia has to bring in major changes based on this report.

Question to the minister of education: Have you talked to your counterparts in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia about what they're doing in education?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We take this very seriously. There was much collaboration. We went back, we looked at reports, and yes, our staff had gone and spoke to their counterparts in other provinces.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

EELC and coordinated movement

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister: Given the fact that you're talking to the other departments, why is it that you're planning on moving ahead alone? Why aren't you planning to do it altogether at the exact same time?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The advisory groups will be created and formed in January. We look forward to working with them and we look forward to having their input and direction as we move forward with a new delivery and a new development of the education system here on Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Raising Maritime standard of education

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier made a pretty big deal recently about the three Maritime Provinces coordinating when they raise minimum wage here in Atlantic Canada.

Question to the minister: Was there any thought at all of coordinating the raising the bar in education at the exact same time?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's always conversation on raising the bar in education. We are looking and doing our best collectively, putting our efforts forward, again, to raise the standards in education so that our learners have an opportunity to go out and not only to be on par with other jurisdictions but to be above that in the global economy.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I would never question whether or not you're doing your best. I think the minister before you did his best and the premier before this Premier did his best and that's why we're in the mess that we're in, because their best wasn't good enough for Islanders, it wasn't good enough for our students, it wasn't good enough for our education system.

The previous minister of education said: We put the school board in place, give them responsibility for that, they look after that and they do a great job. That's what the previous minister said. That was his best.

Students centre of learning circle

Question to the minister of education: Do you think it's time that students actually get made the centre of the learning circle and

the best was for them and not what was best for you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's exactly what we're doing. Our learner is at the centre. It's the focus of what we are doing with this new education system here on Prince Edward Island. We have different advisory councils that will be providing advice and guidance and direction so that we can shape the systems to give our students on Prince Edward Island an opportunity to excel in education. Our focus is on the learner and student achievement.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Maritime education movement

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the fact that other provinces right across Canada, but in particular our neighbours are going through this similar cycle here right now, and given the fact that this government has bobbed this ball for eight years, has never done anything to benefit the student here in Prince Edward Island, has never done anything to benefit Islanders here in Prince Edward Island, has never actually focused on student achievement in Prince Edward Island, has never, until a month ago, talked about excellence in education here in Prince Edward Island – why don't you talk to your counterparts and come up with a system that works for all of Atlantic Canada?

Why are we spending money, wasting resources on Prince Edward Island, when we could be doing it together as a Maritime movement and put our students in the Maritimes the centre of education, excellence in education for the whole region, and build this region from the ground up?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture for the Province of Prince Edward Island and I take it very seriously, this position that I'm in, to ensure that our Island children have the best opportunity to succeed and that's exactly what my priorities are, that's exactly what this new direction in education will be. It's focusing on the learner and student achievement and excellence in education.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

National building codes legislation

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The National Building Code has been in use since 1941. It sets minimum construction standards and is currently in place in every province in Canada except Prince Edward Island. The benefits of bringing PEI into compliance with national building codes would be many: protection of public health safety and welfare, lower operational and maintenance costs, and reduced energy inputs.

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. The National Standards Council has been working on draft legislation to implement national buildings codes here in Prince Edward Island. Can the minister inform this House as to when the legislation will be brought forward?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity last week to attend the engineers of PEI event and that was one of the promotions that they were doing at the particular event. I know there's a number of municipalities across Prince Edward Island, including the city of Summerside, who have adopted the national building code. We will continue to work with the engineers and the association to take advisement from them and continue to work with them on this. It hasn't come forward to our desk, as yet, but

we'll be continuing to have those discussions with them.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, first supplementary.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly was. It was the meeting with the engineers of PEI last week that prompted these questions, and they have concerns that outside the three municipalities that you cite in your answer there, there are no building standards across Prince Edward Island, and they're very concerned that might lead to some problems.

Energy efficiency standards in housing

Some countries, such as Germany, are adopting actually far stricter regulations than we do here, particularly when it comes to energy efficiency. With buildings generating up to 35% of greenhouse gas emissions, will this minister commit to raising energy efficiency standards in housing in order to be more environmentally responsible and to save Islanders money?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do know there's a number of initiatives on Prince Edward Island already, particularly with some private contractors that are promoting. I think it's incumbent upon us to explore those ideas as well, as part of our energy strategy, and that will all be encompassed going forward when we do have a review of our strategy.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary question.

Energy efficiency and infrastructure plan

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All of those innovations, of course, that you cite are voluntary. They're not to comply with any codes, which we do not have here.

With potentially large amounts of federal money becoming available for infrastructure investment, will this government commit to

a long-term infrastructure plan, dare I say an infrastructure summit –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that would include specific parameters on energy efficiency?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated, there was an extensive review of infrastructure plans for Prince Edward Island a number of years ago. We continue to update that plan and put our priorities in place for the new infrastructure discussions that we will be having with the federal government, and that I have had with the federal government, and all of those initiatives will certainly be taken into account.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Climate change and First Ministers' meeting

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, on Monday you and the other premiers and territorial leaders met with the prime minister. On the agenda of this meeting was climate change. Can you provide the House with a brief overview of the discussion on this agenda item?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for asking for an overview and not an update.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the premiers went to that meeting with a common posture. The prime minister recognized the work that had been done in Quebec City and St. John's, and most recently in the Alberta plan.

In a short compass, Prince Edward Island's part in that will be to be sure that we tell our story about our investments in and gains in

terms of renewables and greenhouse gas reductions, about our serious concerns about adaptation to climate change – I think that’s going to be a big part of this – and ultimately to see if we can see this as an opportunity to gain some business for some of the ways in which Prince Edward Islanders have learned already to deal with climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, your first supplementary.

Climate change and national cooperative framework

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The mandate letter of the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment makes reference to taking proactive action to prepare for and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, including joint planning with the Atlantic and federal governments.

My question to the Premier: As a result of Monday’s discussions with the prime minister, is there an agreed upon national cooperative framework that will permit our province to better prepare for and mitigate the harmful effects of climate change?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

In terms of the national efforts or the efforts at the level of the first ministers, all of the first ministers, with the exception of two, will be taking part in the COP21 meetings in Paris. There’s a commitment by the prime minister and in turn by the first ministers to meet within 90 days of those Paris meetings, and that will take place then before the end of February. I fully expect that at those meetings we will have advanced discussions about a framework to deal with adaptation. In the meantime the ministers of environment or as they’re variously called across the country are working quite actively together in putting together work that will indeed mean that Canada works toward a national and successful addressing of adaptation to climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Province’s role in inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Premier and Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs.

Premier, today is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. There has been repeated calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The new federal government has committed to a full inquiry.

Premier, what role will Prince Edward Island take in this examination?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Prince Edward Island has supported the call for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and children from the beginning. We continue with that support. In fact, I spoke this morning with the minister of justice nationally who obviously has an interest in this.

In July of this year, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in Labrador, we met with the national Aboriginal leaders, including women’s organizations nationally as well as people who took part in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There we heard firsthand about the issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women and children. We were thoroughly committed to following this issue and to acting on it as this inquiry proceeds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, first supplementary.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, this inquiry will help shed light on many issues facing Canada's Aboriginal communities. Will Prince Edward Island participate in this effort?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I might say, on the local front, we are in regular communication with, and have met recently, with the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island as well as the Mi'kmaq Confederacy and the Native Council. Prince Edward Island does have a representative on a steering committee that is working together with other provinces towards what will be a summit to take place in Winnipeg in either late January or in the month of February of 2016. We intend to maintain active participation, together with our colleagues nationally, in that effort.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and the Opposition House Leader.

Dementia strategy

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

My first question is to the minister of health. Minister, in the last session of the Legislature you told the House that government was in the final stages of developing a dementia strategy.

Wonder if the minister could advise the House today exactly where you are at with this long overdue strategy.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will take part of that question under advisement and go back to Health PEI and ask for an update on where they currently are at with the strategy. They have the operational responsibility.

We are very committed to the needs of our senior population here in the Province of

Prince Edward Island. We continue to make investments to make sure that we respond to the changing face of the needs of seniors in our communities across Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This minister also told the House that he was committed to moving forward on a strategy, yet to date, and he just basically admitted to it today, there appears to be little movement on this strategy.

Again to the minister: Why are you stalling on the implementation of this strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Government has demonstrated very clearly over the last eight years its commitment to elder care in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We were the government that replaced all public manors in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We are the government that continues to make investments in long-term care beds. Today we've exceeded over 200 beds in communities across Prince Edward Island. We continue to respond to the needs of our aging population.

We are very committed. We find a balance between making sure that we continue to provide appropriate levels of long-term care beds, but also make sure that we continue to respond to investing in home care to make sure that we are meeting the needs to keep seniors in their homes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the summer session this minister again offered thanks to various organizations for their work on the strategy including the Alzheimer society, health care providers, physicians, and dementia experts. The Alzheimer society even has a writing

campaign asking you to put this strategy into action.

Again to the minister: When will we see this new strategy? We've been waiting for over six years now.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As minister of health, I'm very aware of – and we do have a good working relationship with the Alzheimer society. My Department of Family and Human Services does make a fiscal contribution to the NGO. I believe that resources also come from the health side to continue to support their initiatives and the great work that they do every day in communities in supporting families who are living with family members with dementia.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again to this minister. Minister, the strategy, according to you, will deal with recognition, diagnosis and treatment and drug therapy. It will enhance the quality of services and supports for patients and their caregivers.

We brought a motion forward. It passed unanimously in this House. You agreed to it. You committed to it.

Minister, Islanders are anxious to see you live up to your commitment. Why are you not bringing this strategy forward?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think all Members of the Legislative Assembly recognize that there are intense competing demands on services and programs in various aspects of the department of health. As I indicated to the

Member from Stratford-Kinlock, I will bring an update back from Health PEI.

I do want to recognize that as the minister we have been very conscientious of the needs of our seniors' population, if you look at the announcements and the investments that we made in Family and Human Services, into the seniors home repair, Seniors Safe @ Home Program. As I alluded to earlier in the line of questioning the investment in home care has almost doubled since we came into government, the number of home care nurses that are available to support seniors.

We continue to support the Alzheimer society. We continue to make investments, whether it be in infrastructure, whether it be in health human resources, to make sure that we're responding to the needs of our seniors population.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think what this minister needs to understand is he needs to not only live up to his commitments, he needs to follow through on his promises. We've seen it over and over again. We saw the Premier, prior to the provincial election, promise a second ambulance to Souris. Hasn't happened. We've seen this minister of health promise doctors here and there. Hasn't happened. We see this minister quoting that 95% of Islanders have a family doctor but yet his CEO goes out and says only 87% of Islanders have doctors.

Mr. LaVie: Shame, shame!

Mr. Aylward: So there seems to be a communication gap here.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I want to move on because obviously this minister doesn't get it and he doesn't want to live up to his commitments and the promises he made, especially to Islanders suffering with dementia.

Child advocates

Next question to the minister: Minister, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, then Hennessey-Campbell inquest, and our caucus have urged government to address the need for child advocates in our province. Why is your government ignoring this important request and number 15 on the recommendations from the jury and thus denying our children to have a voice?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We take the implementation of the recommendations from the Hennessey-Campbell inquest very seriously.

Last week there was a statement in the House by our Premier who carries the responsibility as the Attorney General here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We are very committed to strengthen the voice of children involved in custody conflict. I am very engaged and well aware of the 15 recommendations and the intentions of the recommendations.

I am very pleased to announce the creation of the HUB model which is a direct line services between government departments. For the first time we're seeing government departments taking action and making sure that we provide more timely and more efficient safe services for children in custody conflict, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly recall the Premier's announcement on this new HUB model and I also recall the Premier also in the hallway speaking to the media and saying: We really need to learn to do the best with what we have. Well, the best of what we have is not good enough. It's not good enough for Island children, especially when you look across this country. Every other jurisdiction in Canada has a children advocate, but for some reason this government simply does not get it. Even the Premier's close personal

friend, Paul MacNeill, knows that PEI needs a child advocate.

Again to the minister of health. We are the only province in Canada that does not provide child advocacy service, which I believe are critical in ensuring the safety, health, and wellbeing of our children. When can Prince Edward Islanders anticipate that a child advocacy office will be established in our province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the Opposition House Leader is listening in on my conversations with the media.

What I said last week in my statement is that we are doing the best for children in Prince Edward Island, in particular, for children at risk in dysfunctional families. Let me elaborate on what exactly we did in response to the recommendation of the coroner that we consider a child advocate or its equivalent.

So here's the equivalent. We have the chief health officer with a role in overseeing the system and making recommendations to government that would also be shared with this House which is a very important expansion of her role and goes directly with the capability that she has in her office.

We will have independent representation for children at risk through the official guardian or through the services of the Family Law Centre.

We will have a HUB model of four departments of government with officials working together to spot cases where there are risks and to make sure that we are acting proactively and sharing information and looking out for the best interest of the child.

I believe that we are going to show the rest of the country that Prince Edward Island can do it our way because we live in a province we can get our arms around and we're going to look after our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader, final question.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Heather Morrison is an incredible individual. She, along with Dr. Lemont Sweet, who was in the position previous to her, do a tremendous job. I personally, even if I was medically trained, would not envy their position. The workload that they have – and now you're dumping more on top of them when we know our own coroner has said that we should have a child advocate here in this province.

To the Premier: Is the fact that you left out any comment on this recommendation an indication that you do not consider this a priority and it's just a matter of dollars for you?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm not sure what the hon. member means by left out any comment, but I'd invite him to read my statement to the House when we responded to the coroner's recommendations and I'd also recommend that he read recommendation 15 of the coroner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: That ends Question Period.